

REPORTING BIRDS SUSPECTED TO HAVE WEST NILE VIRUS

The Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control's Mosquito Control Section is again asking the public's help in surveillance and monitoring West Nile Virus by reporting sick or dead wild birds that might have been stricken or killed by this mosquito-borne disease of considerable concern to human health that also affects horses.

Mosquito Control requests that the public report only sick or dead **crows, blue jays, cardinals, robins, hawks** or **owls**, or localized clusters of five or more sick or dead wild birds of any species. For dead birds, specimens should appear to have been dead for less than 24 hours and not killed by other obvious causes.

Sick or dead birds for the species of interest can be reported to the Mosquito Control Section from Monday through Friday between 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. by calling:

New Castle County findings (Glasgow office): **(302) 836-2555**
Kent and Sussex County findings (Milford office): **(302) 422-1512**

Calls after business hours or on weekends or holidays should leave a message that includes the caller's name, phone number, address and brief report about the finding. (Calls left more than 24 hours before Mosquito Control can review them [often calls made between Friday evening and Sunday morning] often result in the bird conditions becoming too deteriorated for virus testing.)

The Mosquito Control Section will continue its past practice of documenting all phone reports for the species of interest, but will not collect and analyze all reported birds, since the screening criteria for collecting and testing specimens are often not met. However, it is expected that as many birds will be analyzed this year as in 2006.

The section's interest is when and where West Nile Virus might first appear in Delaware this year, and in monitoring the timing and locations of its possible spread throughout the state. Not every specimen needs to be collected and analyzed to accomplish this objective, even when specimens appear very promising for testing. Sampling strategy this year will again be to allocate the number of birds collected and tested between mid-April and late October, and to concentrate on good representation throughout Delaware to generate the most useful information.

There is no cause for alarm or fear that uncollected specimens will transmit West Nile Virus to humans or pets that might consume a sick bird or its carcass. Dead birds or carcasses can be left to decompose in place, or if aesthetic or other concerns require their removal, can be disposed of in the garbage after being bagged. They may also be buried. When handling any dead bird, regardless of cause, direct human skin contact with the specimen should be avoided by using gloves or a shovel to dispose of the carcass.

The Mosquito Control Section's phone numbers above should also be used for citizens to report intolerable numbers of biting mosquitoes. The Section uses this information about severe mosquito nuisance situations to help determine when and where to provide control services.

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